

Scott McCallum
Governor

Jennifer Reinert
Secretary



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
201 East Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7946
Madison, WI 53707-7946
Telephone: (608) 266-7552
Fax: (608) 266-1784
<http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/>
e-mail: dwdsec@dwd.state.wi.us

Date: November 8, 2001

To: Milwaukee W-2 Advisory Panel
Milwaukee W-2 Agencies
Milwaukee W-2 Advisory Panel Workgroup members

From: Jennifer Reinert, Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Reinert', is placed over the 'From' line of the email header.

Re: **DWD Response to Final Workgroup Reports**

Thank you for your continued efforts to work together to serve our W-2 customers in the most effective manner possible. As you know, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has solicited ideas to strengthen the W-2 program and improve the delivery of services in Milwaukee from a number of sources. The response we received has been exciting and positive.

During our meeting held October 2, 2001, Deputy Secretary Richard Wegner said that the Department would review these recommendations and report back to our partners in November. The purpose of the enclosed report is to summarize DWD's response to these recommendations by stating affirmatively what the Department will implement to improve the administration and service delivery of W-2 in Milwaukee.

Thank you again for your efforts and willingness to "roll up your sleeves" to work together. I look forward to continuing our work together and will continue to provide updates as we move to the next steps in this process.

cc: Dick Wegner
Jennifer Noyes
Eric Baker
Mary Rowin
Contract and Implementation Committee



DWD Response to Milwaukee W-2 Partners

State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Issue Date: November 2001



DWD Response to Milwaukee W-2 Partners

For more information about this report, contact:

Mary Rowin

Division of Workforce Solutions

Department of Workforce Development

201 East Washington Avenue, P.O. Box 7935

Madison, WI 53707-7935

(608) 267-9022

**Department of Workforce Development
Report to the Milwaukee W-2 Advisory Panel
November 2001**

Introduction

For the past seven months, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has worked with the public, W-2 agencies, members of the legislature, client advocates, and business leaders to solicit their ideas to strengthen the W-2 program and improve the delivery of services in Milwaukee. DWD received a tremendous and positive response which provided many suggestions. During a meeting held October 2, 2001, in Milwaukee, Deputy Secretary Richard Wegner said that the Department would review these recommendations and report back to the community in November. The purpose of this report is to integrate these recommendations into a coherent whole and to establish the basis for the changes DWD will implement.

Background

In March 2001, Department of Workforce Development Secretary Jennifer Reinert formed the Milwaukee W-2 Advisory Panel in order to review and generate practical ideas for improving the effectiveness of W-2 in serving its Milwaukee clients. The W-2 Milwaukee Advisory Panel was comprised of client advocates, business leaders, labor leaders, educators and local government officials.

After conducting interviews, holding forums and engaging in extensive workshops, the W-2 Advisory Panel identified five areas as having significant potential for improving the effectiveness of W-2 in Milwaukee. These areas were:

- Reviewing the Milwaukee W-2 districts;
- Establishing a W-2 Ombudsman;
- Linking more effectively with Milwaukee employers;
- Promoting training and development; and
- Ensuring a safety net.

Work groups were formed to address these five areas of concern. Out of these work groups, a number of recommendations were developed and several broad suggestions were made.

Extensive input from the Milwaukee W-2 agencies was solicited in order to take advantage of their front-line experience in further developing and implementing the recommendations, as well as contributing additional ideas for improving the effectiveness of W-2 in serving its clients. For those recommendations that were made that impact W-2 policy statewide, input was sought from W-2 agencies outside of Milwaukee as well.

In August 2001, DWD presented its initial summary of responses to the recommendations to the Advisory Panel and W-2 agencies. At this meeting, DWD, the Advisory Panel and the Milwaukee W-2 agencies agreed to work together on refining the recommendations. Secretary Reinert commissioned eight workgroups to meet and review the recommendations and the Department's responses, and to prepare a list of final recommendations for DWD's consideration.

On October 2, 2001, the workgroups reported back to the Secretary, the Milwaukee Advisory Panel, and the W-2 agencies. At that meeting, Secretary Reinert announced that she was establishing a W-2 Monitoring Committee to oversee implementation of the recommendations in Milwaukee. This committee will be comprised of the presidents of the four Milwaukee W-2 agencies, three Advisory Panel members, one Milwaukee County representative, a representative from the Milwaukee PIC, and three DWD managers.

The following summarizes DWD's response to these recommendations by stating affirmatively what the Department will implement to improve the administration and service delivery of W-2 in Milwaukee.

DWD Response to the Final Work Group Reports

I. Safety Net

The Safety Net recommendations present a unique challenge in that they touch on many different W-2 policy areas. The method of implementation varies depending upon the suggestion; however, for the most part, the implementation plan falls into three categories:

- Monitoring recommendations - All monitoring recommendations will be incorporated into the Division's larger monitoring effort.
- Policy change recommendations - With the exception of the Fact Finding (FF) policy changes, all policy changes will be implemented through W-2 Manual releases. FF policy changes will be packaged in an Operations Memo and then incorporated into the W-2 Manual because the changes are more extensive and will require some supporting background information.
- Recommendations requiring coordination with the Employment System Access Coordinator (ESAC) and the Independent Participant Advocate (IPA) - These recommendations have been forwarded to the ESAC and IPA subgroup leaders for incorporation in those roles.

Below is a summary of all Safety Net suggestions that the Department will be implementing.

A. Monitor use of emergency payments under current contract provisions.

1. Include monitoring of emergency payments as part of the Division's larger W-2 monitoring effort with a focus on dissemination patterns.
2. Develop or identify a CARES screen or some other method to assist tracking emergency payments (CARS reports; added information to the Emergency Assistance grant tracking CARES screen).
3. Ensure that W-2 applicants receive information on emergency payments.

B. Ensure all Fact Finding and DHA decisions are enforced.

1. Include FF/DHA (Division of Hearings and Appeals) decision enforcement as one of the roles of the IPA.
2. Add language to the FF decision form (DES-10784) and the Departmental Review decision instructing the participant who to contact if the decision is not carried out in a timely fashion.
3. Include in policy updates the fact that a failure by the W-2 agency to follow-through on the decision within 10 days may result in a corrective action or a failure penalty as defined in the W-2 and Related Programs contract under Sections 16.3 and 17, respectively.
4. Conduct random sample monitoring of Fact Finding and DHA decisions to ensure compliance.

C. Ensure participants are notified of impending payment reductions to allow for a reconciliation process before the payment is received.

1. Determine cause for the delay in payment reduction notices under current payment system.
2. Coordinate with the W-2 Advisory Panel CARES group to ensure that the reduced payment is issued relatively close to the time that the nonparticipation occurred while allowing an adequate timeframe for reconciling differences.
3. As DWS further defines its policies on how to engage W-2 participants who are not participating, include specific guidance on how to reconcile nonparticipation issues.
4. Determine means in which to link IPA once nonparticipation is identified.

D. Allow benefits to be retroactive to the date of placement in the case of disputed decisions.

1. Pursue a statutory language change to allow for retroactive benefits for applicants. The Department will look for opportunities to package this

change with other legislative changes it is pursuing. If this is not possible, it can be pursued in the next Biennial Budget.

2. Require an expedited review of any disputed application decision, e.g., two to three days. This would also expedite W-2 payment of benefits, if warranted. The Department will consult with Milwaukee Fact Finders in order to determine the feasibility of this suggestion.
3. Pursue internally whether the remedy for W-2 placement changes for W-2 participants should be retroactive or prospective. This will be packaged with the suggestions under Item B.

E. Monitor sanctions to identify patterns of concern and take appropriate actions.

1. Continue monitoring and rectifying inappropriate sanctions on a quarterly basis using the strategies outlined in DWD's response to LAB.
2. Include monitoring sanctions in an overall DWS W-2 monitoring plan.

F. Reassess all CMS placements after 30 days and monitor placements exceeding 30 days. Suggestions # 1 and 2 will be included in the January 2002 W-2 Manual Release.

1. Change the timeframe in which a FEP must reassess a CMS participant from 60 days to 30 days.
2. Update policy language in terms of appropriate placement if someone does not obtain employment within 30 days.
3. Develop a standard form that would be reviewed by the participant and FEP and signed by the participant prior to CMS placement. CMS participants have to agree in writing to the placement. This form would ensure that the terms of the CMS placement are clearly spelled out and consistent statewide.
4. Create a report that will assist the W-2 agencies in identifying individuals that have been in CMS for more than 30 days (similar to the internal report produced by the Data Warehouse).
5. As a part of the monitoring process, when CMS placements go beyond 30 days, require W-2 agencies to report back to the Regional Office staff with a brief explanation of how the situation has been remedied or why the placement remains appropriate. Alternative: The Department will require W-2 agencies to make comments in CARES regarding why the case has exceeded the 30 days.

6. Include in the monitoring function those cases in which the participant reaches the 24-month time limit (or somewhere close to the 24th month limit) and is subsequently placed in CMS. Monitoring should focus on ensuring that an assessment was completed prior to placement and that proper policy for CMS placement was followed

G. Monitor cases that are not processed for extensions.

1. Finalize development of a centrally located database in order to provide easy access to extension/non-extension statistics.
2. Work with the W-2 agencies to follow up with people who were denied an extension and who voluntarily declined an extension and offer the full resources of the Job Center.

H. Support the provision of transportation services as appropriate for eligible working families.

1. Clarify policy on transportation assistance, including:
 - a. Allowable transportation assistance for people leaving the W-2 program;
 - b. When and how transportation assistance is available for W-2 participants;
 - c. Ensuring transportation policies recognize the need to balance day-to-day family activities (dropping off children at school and day care, family emergencies during the work or activity times) with work program goals; and
 - d. Reinforce the use of Job Access Loans for automobile purchases.
2. Ensure a coordinated and systematic approach to W-2 transportation services that includes the WETAP grant providers and W-2 agencies.
3. DWD will explore, and encourage W-2 agencies to explore, programs that allow easier access to cars for participants.

I. Monitor CSJ work-sites to ensure appropriateness of activities. Item #4 will be included in the January 2002 W-2 Manual release.

1. Conduct an analysis of those participants who have been in the same CSJ work-site for the past 12 months and determine their barriers to moving on. Explore whether or not it would be possible to pull this information from CARES. The Department will explore the feasibility of this suggestion with its Research & Statistics Section before making a final decision.

2. Include monitoring of CSJ work-sites as a part of the Division's larger W-2 monitoring effort with an eye toward insuring that participants are assigned to CSJ sites designed for specific training and with a specific timeframe for completing the training.
3. Work with training staff to encourage FEPs to provide up-front, ongoing and concise communication regarding the necessity of participating in certain activities and the plan for advancement once those activities have been completed.
4. Advise agencies to explore whether a CSJ can become a Trial Job. This would allow W-2 participants to earn real wages, EITC and Social Security credits.

J. Ensure the proactive pursuit of SSI applications for potentially eligible W-2 participants.

1. Provide detailed policy on the definition and activities involved in the SSI advocacy role and agreements.
2. Pursue a grant for specialized SSI Advocacy Training.
3. Expand the Case Management Resource Guide section on Social Security Administration Programs to include information on the role and duties of the SSI advocate, current forms and tips on how to expedite the application process.

K. Ensure full and consistent implementation of established processes and policies regarding extensions. Items # 2 and 4 will be included in the January 2002 W-2 Manual Release.

1. Provide technical assistance to all Milwaukee W-2 agencies on an as-requested basis or as needed, as determined by the Department, if monitoring uncovers issues that warrant technical assistance.
2. Ensure all policies and procedures related to extensions are included in the W-2 Manual and the CARES Guide.
3. Update training materials or develop training specific to time limits/extensions.
4. Update W-2 time limit extension policy to ensure it:
 - a. Doesn't discourage W-2 agencies from applying for extensions when appropriate;
 - b. Is clear that former W-2 participants who have reached their time limit and have either been determined not to qualify for an extension or voluntarily declined an extension have the option of returning to the

program and having an extension request reviewed again at any time as well as their eligibility for other available services, Job Center, FS, MA, etc.

II. Training, Education and Business Connection - Hard to Serve W-2 Participants

Sections II, III and IV of this report focus on DWD's plans for improving the training, education and business connection for hard to serve W-2 participants, job advancement for low income workers, and services to the Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) population.

A. Ensure the development and use of appropriate assessment tools.

1. DWD initiatives currently under development:
 - a. The 2002-2003 W-2 RFP and Performance Standards includes language that strengthens the W-2 screening and assessment process.
 - b. A new W-2 screening process is under development with the assistance of the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Center for Addiction and Behavioral Health Research. The screening process will be implemented uniformly statewide. Training and technical assistance will be provided to agencies to ensure proper use.
2. Initiatives that DWD plans to undertake:
 - a. The Department, in consultation with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, will develop a list of barrier triggers that will be used to guide W-2 agencies concerning when to refer a participant for a formal assessment.

B. Clarifying the need to make referrals to DVR or other appropriate providers for persons with disabilities.

1. DWD initiatives currently under development:
 - a. The Department has submitted a grant application to the federal Department of Education for funding to support efforts at employing disabled individuals. One of the five projects within the grant application focuses on services to TANF-eligible participants. If the Department's grant application is successful, the plan is to hire a full-time staff person to provide technical assistance to W-2 agencies on serving persons with disabilities. In addition, the grant would provide funding for screening and assessment efforts.
2. Initiatives that DWD plans to undertake:
 - a. The Department will develop a collaborative working relationship between the Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce

Solutions in terms of serving individuals who meet eligibility for both programs. This collaboration will include: piloting a DVR/W-2 wraparound case management project, similar to the Single Coordinated Care Plan project in Milwaukee. The focus will be on providing TANF-eligible participants with disabilities an employability plan that was jointly developed and implemented between the W-2 and DVR agencies.

- b. Implementing cross-systems training between agencies that serve a mutual client base of individuals with employment limitations, including DVR, W-2 agencies and other appropriate agencies.

C. Initiatives for persons who stay home with disabled family members.

- 1. DWD initiatives currently under development:
 - a. The Department has submitted a proposal to the Annie E. Casey Foundation entitled, "Allowing Parental Caregiving to Constitute Work Under W-2". If successful in obtaining funding from the Casey Foundation, the Department would start a partnership with a specialized day-care center to employ parents at home allowing them to earn work credits for Social Security, Unemployment Insurance and other work-related benefits.
- 2. Initiatives that DWD plans to undertake:
 - a. The Department, in coordination with the Department of Health and Family Services, will explore the Medicaid state waiver option that would allow payment to a spouse or parent for the personal assistance services they render to an MA-eligible family member. Under this waiver, each Medicaid eligible individual is assessed for the amount of daily in-home personal care that they need that will prevent them from entering a nursing home for the same level of care. Once assessed, the hiring of a personal care worker is authorized for the number of daily hours needed in a personal care plan. Until the above initiative is implemented, participants who are coded in CARES as remaining in the home to care for a disabled family member will be monitored carefully by the Department to ensure that the participant receives a time-limit extension when appropriate.

D. Improve the policy for aggregating training and education hours.

- 1. DWD initiatives currently under development:
 - a. The Department will revise W-2 policy. Currently W-2 allows an individual to aggregate education and training hours for up to 258 hours in a six-month period. The revision will allow education and training hours to be aggregated for up to 516 hours over a one-year period.

E. Improve guidance to fully implement current policies on education and training.

1. DWD initiatives currently under development:

- a. The Department will provide clarification and guidance through the W-2 Manual, W-2 Operations Memos and/or DWS Administrator's Memos, and W-2 Regional Meetings. Emphasis will be on application of the Technical College component and aggregating education and training hours.

2. Initiatives that DWD plans to undertake:

- a. The Department will develop a concept paper that emphasizes employing the hard-to-serve W-2 population through innovative practices such as designing a supportive work environment model or developing a model that combines basic education with vocational training that is carried out in an employment environment suitable to the needs of the individual. The objective will be to use the concept paper to solicit participation of one or more Milwaukee W-2 agencies in testing the program concept. As part of the pilot, the W-2 agency would identify and work with employers to restructure jobs for hard to serve W-2 participants.

- b. The Department will develop a concept paper that addresses the training needs of recent W-2 leavers:
 - who are in part-time or seasonal jobs and are at risk of returning to cash assistance due to weak labor force attachment; or
 - who have lost their jobs due to weak skills and are presently in need of further W-2 services.

The objective is to pilot a time-limited training program utilizing a research design with random assignment of participants to determine the most effective training strategies for assisting this segment of the W-2 population in retaining full-time, year round work. The concept paper will be developed based on an analysis that is completed in coordination with current W-2 service providers and their sub-contractors.

III. Training, Education and Business Connection - Job Advancement for Low Income Workers

A. Address unmet needs of low-income workers by assisting them in obtaining training.

1. Create a pilot for a monthly subsidy for working families to attend training. Create and promote training linked to a job that allows the employee to work and obtain training during work hours and/or at the workplace.
 - a. Implementation: Define program parameters and draft a proposal to obtain funding. (For initial parameters – see Attachment 1)
 - b. Timeline: Implement pilot in September 2002.
2. Encourage the use of job retention and/or training bonuses. These bonuses are already allowable under WAA and CR.
 - a. Implementation: Issue guidance on utilizing bonuses; add this to the guidance DWD issues on fully implementing the available education and training policies. This topic will be the first focus of the efforts targeted toward sharing best practices (see D. below).

B. Improve coordination in Milwaukee among DWD partners.

1. Overcome existing Milwaukee issues (political, etc.) – reinstate former Local Collaborative Planning Team (LCPT) meetings on a regular basis. Involve employers in the new meetings. Also invite Milwaukee Jobs Initiative (MJl) to present Workforce Training Center model to group.
 - a. Implementation: Eric Baker and Gerard Randall will lead this effort along with the Milwaukee Regional Office Director.
 - b. Timeline: Monthly meetings will begin in January.

C. Improve existing system for job advancement.

1. Obtain and make available labor market information to targeted industries and occupations.
 - a. Implementation: Paul Saeman will lead this effort, working with labor market analysts, to inform W-2 agencies of W-2 caseload and labor market trends.
 - b. Timeline: This will be an ongoing effort.

D. Utilize coordination and retention models from balance of state.

1. Implementation: DWD will establish a forum for sharing best practices among agencies. This will include, among other efforts, making best practices available on the DWD website.

E. Foster relationships with and enhance services to employers.

1. DWD will establish an internal workgroup to discuss employer services across programs and make specific recommendations for improving coordination.
 - a. Implementation: DWD will establish a forum for sharing best practices among agencies.

IV. Training, Education and Business Connection – FSET

The issues raised in this workgroup, though of obvious importance to W-2 agencies and their staff, are also of importance to the economic support agencies and their staff. In addition, these changes require coordination with the Division's Office of Nutrition Services & Program Integrity's Food Stamp Program activities since FSET participation is related to Food Stamp eligibility.

For these reasons, the Department will form a workgroup on FSET issues comprised of members from the W-2 Contract & Implementation Committee (CIC) and the Income Maintenance Advisory Committee (IMAC) with staffing from DWD and DHFS.

V. CARES (Client Assistance for Re-employment and Economic Support)

A. W-2 Payment Cycle

The Department will establish a system of semi-monthly payments for people on cash assistance to address the concern that the W-2 program takes too long to issue the first check to participants.. Monthly participation periods will run from the 1st through the 15th and the 16th through the end of the month. W-2 payments will be issued semi-monthly, no later than fifteen days after each pay period ends, on the 15th and 30th of each month (except for February which would pay on the 15th and the 28th/29th). Each regular payment will be \$336.50 for a Community Service Job and \$314 for a W-2 Transition placement. The initial payment would be prorated based on the number of days the individual participated during the first participation period.

The fifteen-day payment processing period after the end of the participation period may be shortened if additional automated support, as described by the CARES subgroup, can be developed. The CARES subgroup suggestions included direct web-based attendance reporting by job sites, streamlined sanction processing, increased hours of on-line availability, and the like. The Department will explore these enhancements.

B. Implementation Cost and Timeline

Staff at DWS and Deloitte Consulting are preparing a preliminary estimate of cost and timeframes for implementing the semi-monthly cycle. Feedback from them is expected in early November. Planning for the system change and scheduling implementation will proceed based on that feedback.

VI. Milwaukee Consumer Choice Initiative

A. The Open District

To improve program services and ensure quality outcomes in Milwaukee County, DWD will be instituting a system of customer choice. The basic premise of the Open District concept is that competition will motivate agencies to provide higher quality services, and, consequently, will improve the effectiveness of the W-2 service delivery system in Milwaukee.

The Department believes that an Open District in Milwaukee can only be effectively implemented in conjunction with additional tools designed to protect customers, i.e., a neutral access point and an independent client advocate. Because they provide consumers with access to neutral information and independent advocacy services, the Employment System Access Coordinator (ESAC) and the Independent Participant Advocate (IPA) provide the crucial infrastructure necessary to support the operation of an Open District. Because clients will have resources for navigating through the system, and advocates to assist them with difficulties, they will be able to make decisions in a conflict free environment.

The ESAC will serve as an access specialist, providing potential clients with neutral information to use in assessing whether W-2 or other programs might best meet their needs. The IPA will serve as a client advocate, performing an ombudsperson function internally when ongoing clients perceive difficulty in a relationship with the W-2 agency of his/her choice.

1. How the Open District will work:
 - a. New participants will be assigned to the geographical region in which they reside, with an option to choose another provider prior to enrolling in the W-2 program.
 - b. Once a choice is made, a participant stays at that agency for six months, or the length of his or her employability plan, whichever is less.
 - c. Once the six month period ends, the participant can choose to stay or leave for another agency; if they choose to leave, there is a six month

commitment to the new agency or the new employability plan, whichever is less.

- d. These same operating principles will apply to ongoing participants when the transition to the Open District occurs as well as for new participants as they come into the system.
- e. Advocacy would occur independent of the time lines for choosing an agency, i.e., a complaint doesn't trigger the opportunity to choose a new agency.

2. Implementation of the Open District

The Open District will be implemented when funding arrangements for support activities such as ESAC and IPA can be clarified. The Department is vigorously pursuing funding for the ESAC and IPA. (Note: the current economic downturn has raised concerns about increasing W-2 caseloads. As a result, using TANF monies to finance a "contingency fund" is a possibility under growing consideration by various parties. Using TANF funds for a contingency fund would reduce the availability of those funds for ESAC and IPA).

3. CARES Changes for an Open District

The Department has determined that no programming changes are needed in CARES to implement the Open District. However, security and system access issues must be addressed.

4. Performance Standards

The Department has reviewed the 2002-03 W-2 contract performance standards and determined that because many of the standards already include exemptions and because the level is less than 100%, the standards will work in an Open District. The Department is also reviewing the FEP/caseload ratio as a performance standard; we want to focus more on outcomes and intend to use the FEP/caseload ratio for monitoring purposes and to help understand agency performance.

5. Financing Principles in an Open District

- a. The amount of funding for Milwaukee agencies in total for the 2002-2003 W-2 Contract is \$188,624,098.
- b. The base allocation at the start of the Open District (assuming a January 1, 2002 start date) will be the allocations published as a part of the contracting and RFP process. This allocation uses caseload numbers

for the period from January 1, 2000 through July 31, 2001 for half of the allocation and a one-sixth distribution for the other half.

- c. 100 percent of the Benefits dollars are variable (following the caseload).
- d. Benefits allocation is distributed based on each agency's percentage of the cash caseload for the prior six months.
- e. A portion of the Administrative/Services dollars are variable (aggregate 60% fixed and 40% variable).
- f. The variable portion of the Administrative/Services dollars are distributed based on the combined cash, case management, FSET, and childcare cases (these are the same case types as the original allocations) for the prior six months.
- g. The portion of the Administrative/Services allocation that is variable increases over time (based on the assumption that implementation of the Open District will start slow and increase over time).
- h. An adjustment will be made each quarter.
- i. Although the calculation for the adjustment of the Benefits portion of the allocations differs from the calculation for the adjustment of the Administrative/Services portion, both portions are combined in a single allocation per agency. This retains the flexibility between Benefits and Administrative/Services that is a part of the contracts in the balance of state.
- j. Bonus funding will be calculated on the final contract levels, rather than the initial contract levels.

B. The Employment System Access Coordinator (ESAC)

The ESAC works to help potential consumers decide how to “navigate” through the array of program options at the earliest stage of contact. Consumers seeking to access the employment system in Milwaukee will be met with this neutral expert on state programs, who is charged with imparting information about W-2 as well as all other programs that may possibly benefit the potential consumer.

The ESAC will not duplicate the efforts of the W-2 agency staff. Rather, the ESAC will make the applicant aware of all of the possibilities open to them, performing a neutral function which precedes that of the W-2 staff. In essence, the ESAC will open the door to true client choice at each of the Milwaukee County W-2 Agency offices by performing the following functions:

1. Establish an applicant/participant profile through an interactive interview with the applicant using a method to record information that will be passed on to the appropriate Job Center service provider. The profile information includes: job history, employment skills, education, income and assets, family and household composition, child support case status, services/systems the applicant is currently receiving, and the circumstances that affect the applicant's ability to work.
2. Explore work program options.
3. Provide information on other appropriate public assistance programs and resources.
4. Screen for priority and emergency services. Work in conjunction with the W-2 agency to ensure referrals are appropriate and timely.
5. If appropriate, register the applicant in CARES or refer to Jobnet to self-register on G*Stars.
6. Schedule FEP and SSP appointments.
7. Identify emergency service needs. Take a proactive role to connect applicants to providers within the Job Center and services outside the Job Center to address immediate needs. These providers may include members of the Children's Services Network.
8. Review verification requirements, rights and responsibilities for income maintenance and work programs including W-2 timelimits information.
9. Explain the Independent Participate Advocate (IPA) role/function.
10. Provide informational packets of resources, programs and W-2 literature. Coordinate information sharing with the IPA.
11. Provide written and verbal material on the W-2 agencies in Milwaukee County and explain choice and transfer options.
12. Assist applicants in coordinating services across systems (e.g., child welfare, AODA, Corrections, W-2, etc.). Facilitate participation across systems for those involved or potentially involved in a coordinated care plan. Notify all systems needed for the coordinated care plan, based on the DHFS and DWD initiative for the family.
13. Assist the participant in the transfer process and perform an exit interview after the participant has made a choice of services.

14. The ESAC is available for ongoing consultation with the participant, SSP/FEPS, and other service providers.
15. In addition to the above functions:
 - a. The ESAC role may include additional responsibilities under a written agreement with Job Center partners such as assigning applicants to an in-house assessment.
 - b. The ESAC will coordinate with Job Center partners to direct applicant/participant flow and provide collected information to appropriate staff in order to facilitate the eligibility process.
 - c. The ESAC reports to the contract monitor on a regular basis to summarize efforts and identify trends.
 - d. The ESAC will coordinate services with the Milwaukee service providers and meet on a regular basis to discuss participant flow, transfer procedures and other areas of concern.
 - e. At no point does the ESAC determine final eligibility or placement in any W-2 or IM program.
 - f. The ESAC will not make referrals to outside agencies as the result of the preliminary screenings done by the ESAC.
 - g. The ESAC will not take on duties or responsibilities that are statutorily or administratively the responsibility of the W-2 agency such as developing an employability plan, assigning job search or screening for domestic abuse.

Once a person has made up his or her mind to pursue services at a W-2 agency, the role of the ESAC ends. The initial client profile created by the ESAC, along with other information is transferred to the W-2 agency to use in creating an employability plan, which will incorporate employment activities and support services which the person may need.

C. The Independent Participant Advocate (IPA)

The Independent Participant Advocate complements the ESAC by performing mediation services and providing impartial information to clients already participating in the W-2 process.

The IPA performs the ombudsperson role for currently enrolled clients who find themselves in disagreements or conflicts with an agency's actions or decisions regarding his/her status and performance. The IPA plays a more defined advocacy role in the dissemination of pertinent information than the ESAC.

While the ESAC conveys a broad range of information to a potential consumer trying to decide on the direction of his/her service delivery needs, the IPA will frequently be in contact with consumers relative to sanctioning, disputing placement decisions, etc. In these instances, the IPA can help to clarify reasons for the sanction, as well as advocate for the client. In essence, the IPA will play a crucial role in clarifying the rights and responsibilities of clients. The information and education provided by the IPA will be more detailed and focused than that provided by the ESAC.

IPAs will also analyze client and program outcomes to identify areas for program reform, particularly in terms of client-agency conflicts. To reinforce the impartiality of these advocates, a main office located outside of the W-2 agency will be made available for meetings with clients.

The IPA will perform the following functions:

1. Provide advocacy services to help clients who have concerns involving decisions and actions taken by the W-2 agency;
2. Participate in mediating disputes between participants and W-2 agencies;
3. Survey their “customers” to measure their satisfaction with the services provided by the IPA;
4. Develop analysis reports, and provide feedback to the W-2 agencies, ESAC and DWD that describe issues identified by the IPA that should be addressed by policy, training and/or the contract manager.
5. Provide assistance in preparing and filing complaints, grievances and appeals;
6. Provide negotiation services during the conciliation process;
7. Witness for the participant in Fact Finding reviews; and
8. Investigate and identify possible failure to serve violations and make recommendations, based on their findings, to the contract manager.

Working Family Subsidy Pilot Program - Overview

The driving concept of the subsidy pilot project is the need to support low-income workers in obtaining training that will help them advance to higher paying employment. Many parents employed in low wage positions do not take advantage of existing training programs. Often, low-income parents do not have time to balance employment, family needs and training. They can not afford to reduce their work hours to obtain training.

We propose to address this significant barrier to low-income worker advancement by providing a subsidy to supplement part-time work while attending training. We propose two concurrent pilot programs, one in Milwaukee with approximately 100 participants, and one in the balance of state with approximately 50 participants. This requires new funding, and DWD has submitted a proposal to fund the pilot to the Annie E. Casey foundation.

Program parameters:

- Participants will work 15-25 hours during the program, with the balance of their hours spent in a training program (the number of hours spent working will depend on the number of hours required in training). Examples: 20 training, 20 working; or 15 training, 25 working.
- Program operators will establish agreements with employers to allow employees to work part-time and train part-time.
- Participants will receive a monthly subsidy from the program operator for up to one year of participation in a training program that will lead to advancement.
- The subsidy amount should align with W-2 pro-rated CSJ policy; thus, the subsidy would be \$341 month. We will assess the possibility of structuring the subsidy to increase incrementally during program.
- To be eligible for the subsidy, participants must meet the following requirements:
 - Must have been working 6 consecutive months prior to program entry. Does not have to be the same employer for entire 6 months; also does not have to be same employer where will work during program participation.
 - Must be a custodial parent.
 - Must meet the income requirement (recommend use something higher than 200% of poverty to offer the program more broadly).
 - Not necessary to have participated in W-2 or economic support programs.

- DWD will select a program provider through a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process. The RFP will require that bidders target an employer, sector, or occupation and that bidders provide evidence of a working relationship with that entity.
- The RFP will include the following subsidy program components: employer relations, participant eligibility determination, case management, attendance tracking, mentoring/coaching, and retention.

We should explore the possibility of using existing funds (WAA, WtW or WIA) to cover the costs of the training. The workgroup emphasized the importance of soft skills, and this service must be provided either as part of the training, or as a component of the subsidy services.